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SUBJECT: TOGO/FRENCH MFA: AMBASSADOR DUNN'S OCTOBER 24  
CONSULTATIONS

Classified By: Acting DCM Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In an October 24 meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn, MFA DAS-equivalent Bruno Foucher said that Togo was evolving well. He complained that German caution was impeding the unblocking of EU funding for Togo; resuming economic assistance rapidly would help prevent Togo from become a "criminalized" state. Faure was doing a good job but needed to reduce the influence of old-guard members of his entourage. Post-transition Togo remained a concern, however, with many economic challenges. Foucher tended to downplay Gilchrist Olympio,s role in Togo,s evolving political scene but agreed that the Faure regime might consider offering him an honorific post of some kind should he and the UFC decide to participate in the government. Togo had asked France to help reform its army, which Foucher and Ambassador Dunn agreed was necessary, as was the development of a civilian or gendarme-like force for internal security. China was becoming a more important actor in Togo and regionally, although a local backlash seemed to be developing. Foucher offered brief comments on Togo,s neighbors Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Cote d,Ivoire.  
END SUMMARY.

#### GERMAN RECALCITRANCE

12. (C) MFA West Africa DAS-equivalent Bruno Foucher on October 24 met with visiting U.S. Ambassador to Togo David Dunn and Embassy Africa Watchers. Foucher opened by saying that Togo was evolving well and could serve as a model for other states undergoing transition. He then sharply criticized Germany for its excessive caution in evaluating Togo and refusal to agree to unblock EU funding. He said that German resistance seemed to emanate from its mission in Lome and not from Berlin. Foucher said that German reticence in Togo was similar to German reticence in other parts of Africa, such as Guinea and Chad. He considered the German attitude puzzling but possibly a result of the violence directed against Germany during the April 2005 election period. Ambassador Dunn noted that the "Group of Five" in Lome (the U.S., French, and German missions, along with the EU and PNUD representatives) worked well together and consulted frequently. Foucher nonetheless repeated his frustration with the Germans.

13. (C) Renewed funding was important for Togo, Foucher continued, in order to strengthen the economy and reduce the possibility that Togo would become a "criminalized" state. He expressed concern about increased illegal drug trafficking as a real threat, especially given Togo,s unsettled state in the wake of Eyadema,s death and the impoverishment

compounded by years of withheld donor assistance.

FAURE: "A GOOD LEADER"

14. (C) Foucher's evaluation of Faure was quite positive. He said Faure was a "good leader" and "progressively moving forward." Foucher acknowledged the unhelpful influence of the "old guard" members of his entourage, largely carryovers from his father's days. He was cautiously optimistic that Faure would distance himself from them over time.

#### ECONOMIC CONCERNS

15. (C) The period after the present phase of transition and stabilization would present challenges, Foucher predicted, particularly with respect to the economy. He commented on the need to develop investor confidence and arrangements with the international financial institutions. Ambassador Dunn said that Togo's human resources were a distinct positive. The Togolese work-ethic enjoyed a positive reputation regionally and compared favorably with that of neighbors such as Ghana. He also predicted that stability would encourage the return of Togolese who had left Togo during the Eyadema years, prospered, and were now in a position to contribute economically upon returning. Debt relief was also a possibility. That said, Ambassador Dunn noted that the economy needed reform, with better management of Togo's phosphate and cotton industries, two of the country's major economic sectors.

16. (C) Foucher said that France was encouraging Togo more and more to take action on its own when dealing with institutions such as the EU -- there was still an expectation among Togolese that France would serve as Togo's advocate in

such fora. The French were thus advising the Togolese not to look reflexively to the former colonial power, Foucher explained. In this and in other respects, France was pushing Togo to come out of the isolation engendered by the Eyadema years.

#### GILCHRIST OLYMPIO

17. (C) When asked about UFC leader Gilchrist Olympio, Ambassador Dunn said that it would serve Togo's interests if he became more energized and involved. He reviewed Olympio's original decision not to join the new reconciliation government and his present change of course leaning toward participation, contingent on obtaining an important role for the UFC, if not for himself personally. Foucher and Ambassador Dunn discussed the generational change in Togo, Olympio's advancing age, his longstanding ties to France (and corresponding long absence from Togo), and his uncertain prospects for the next presidential elections in the 2010/2011 period. Foucher tended to discount Olympio's importance as a political factor over time. Ambassador Dunn noted that Eyadema's death may have shifted Olympio's focus from retribution to ways to improve Togo's prospects. Foucher agreed with the notion that the Faure regime could offer Olympio an honorific position or title that could help heal old wounds and allow both sides to save face. The position could be more than honorific -- Olympio could serve as mediator of the republic or as a senior economic advisor, something he would be qualified to do.

#### IMPROVED CLIMATE

18. (C) Ambassador Dunn noted the positive changes in Togo since his arrival at post at the beginning of the year, when the opposition was in boycott mode and distrust and suspicion were high. Tensions were noticeably reduced since then, with a general acceptance of Faure's mandate.

#### REFORMING THE ARMY

19. (C) Foucher agreed that finding a role for the army, keeping it out of internal security and police work, and developing a civilian force or gendarmerie to maintain law

and order would be important, given the army's history of heavy-handed repression in the service of the Gnassingbe clan. Foucher said that the Faure regime had approached France about assisting in reforming the army. Change would take time given the entrenched views of the military and the continuing influence of retired military and their continued allegiance to the Gnassingbes. Foucher noted the good performance of Togolese troops in a number of international peacekeeping operations and commented that continued or expanded Togolese participation in these missions was one way of keeping the army busy and at the same time allowing it to develop expertise and professionalism.

#### CHARLES DEBBASCH

¶10. (C) Speaking of the old guard, Foucher was scathing in his criticism of French citizen Charles Debbasch, a longtime advisor to Eyadema and still close to the Gnassingbes. Debbasch had been convicted of fraud in France and although the judgment remained to be executed, there was no specific warrant for his arrest, a loophole that had allowed him to travel to France once or twice since Eyadema's death. Foucher believed Debbasch was instrumental in Faure's "coup" following Eyadema's death. Among several of Debbasch's unsavory activities was his recent attempt to protect his properties in France by having them designated as Togolese diplomatic facilities, which Foucher said the GOF had rejected. Foucher said that the French regularly remind Faure of the need to rid himself of people like Debbasch.

#### CHINA

¶11. (C) Foucher and Ambassador Dunn agreed on China's growing presence in Togo and in the region, with a focus on the sugar industry and motor scooters, and with a broader objective of eliminating Taiwan's influence. Foucher said that China's engagement in Africa was a growing concern of Japan. Foucher said that a backlash was developing, however, with Africans resentful of the Chinese and viewing them increasingly as predators. Some of the Chinese "laborers" were also convicts promised reduced sentences for working in Africa, where some chose to stay when their sentences were

completed.

#### BENIN, BURKINA FASO, GHANA, COTE D'IVOIRE

¶12. (C) Asked to comment on regional issues affecting Togo and its neighbors, Foucher said that the situation in BENIN was not bad. Its new president represented a new style of leadership for Benin and his political position was consequently not strong and could even be described as "fragile," Foucher commented. However, the atmosphere had improved since the elections. Foucher described BURKINA FASO as a "bon eleve" (good student) and President Compaore as quite astute and clever, and able to receive a good amount of international financial support. Compaore had moderated Burkinabe policies towards COTE D'IVOIRE and Libya, enhancing his credibility. However, problems remained, including the cotton sector, rising corruption, and the still unverified nature of support provided to rebel forces in Cote d'Ivoire.

Still, Compaore on balance had been useful to the region and had made valuable contributions to Togo.

¶13. (C) Foucher said that GHANA seemed focused more on domestic than international issues, with France disappointed in Ghana's half-hearted engagement in the Cote d'Ivoire problem, noting that Kufuor did not attend the recent AU PSC summit on Cote d'Ivoire. Ghana had also blocked UN Sanctions Committee efforts on Cote d'Ivoire before recently relenting. France viewed Kufuor favorably notwithstanding Ghana's Cote d'Ivoire policies, Foucher said, adding that one could appreciate Ghana's reservations about getting involved in an issue that could have repercussions in Ghana if Cote d'Ivoire continued to deteriorate. Moreover, Ghana was able to profit from instability in Cote d'Ivoire in terms of its ports, cacao production, diamond trafficking, and the like.

¶14. (U) Ambassador Dunn has cleared this message.  
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